

2018 Current Fiscal Year Report: National Research Advisory Council

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1. Department or Agency

Department of Veterans Affairs

2. Fiscal Year

2018

3. Committee or Subcommittee

National Research Advisory Council

3b. GSA Committee No.

5293

4. Is this New During Fiscal Year?

No

5. Current Charter

05/14/2019

6. Expected Renewal Date

05/14/2021

7. Expected Term Date

8a. Was Terminated During Fiscal Year?

No

8b. Specific Termination Authority

8c. Actual Term Date

9. Agency Recommendation for Next Fiscal Year

Continue

10a. Legislation Req to Terminate?

No

10b. Legislation Pending?

Not Applicable

11. Establishment Authority Agency Authority

12. Specific Establishment Authority

38 USC 7303

13. Effective Date

09/21/1999

14. Committee Type

Continuing

14c. Presidential?

No

15. Description of Committee Scientific Technical Program Advisory Board

16a. Total Number of Reports

1

16b. Report Date

02/01/2018

Report Title

2017 Report to SecVA

Number of Committee Reports Listed: 1

17a. Open 4 17b. Closed 0 17c. Partially Closed 0 Other Activities 0 17d. Total 4

Meetings and Dates

Purpose

The Council provides advice to the Secretary and the Under Secretary for Health (USH) and makes recommendations on the nature and scope of research and development sponsored and/or conducted by the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) to include: (1) the policies and projects of the Office of Research and Development (ORD); (2) the focus of research on the high priority health care needs of Veterans; (3) the balance of basic, applied, and outcomes research; (4) the scientific merit review process; (5) the appropriate mechanisms by which ORD can leverage its resources to enhance the research financial base; (6) the rapid response to changing health care needs, while maintaining the stability of the research infrastructure; and (7) the protection of human subjects of research; while supporting MyVA Breakthrough Priority, "Improve Veteran Experience." The Council provides advice and makes recommendations to the Chief Research and Development Officer, the Under Secretary for Health and the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, concerning the nature and scope of Research and Development activities, particularly those that support Priority, "Increase Access to Healthcare". Since this Council is a policy and not a review board, it does not consider specific research proposals, although studies that support Priority, "Increase Access to Healthcare", is summarized and briefed to the Council. The Council periodically forwards letters to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs expressing concern about specific research issues.

Start

End

12/06/2017 - 12/06/2017

The Council provides advice to the Secretary and the Under Secretary for Health (USH) and makes recommendations on the nature and scope of research and development sponsored and/or conducted by the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) to include: (1) the policies and projects of the Office of Research and Development (ORD); (2) the focus of research on the high priority health care needs of Veterans; (3) the balance of basic, applied, and outcomes research; (4) the scientific merit review process; (5) the appropriate mechanisms by which ORD can leverage its resources to enhance the research financial base; (6) the rapid response to changing health care needs, while maintaining the stability of the research infrastructure; and (7) the protection of human subjects of research; while supporting MyVA Breakthrough Priority, "Improve Veteran Experience." The Council provides advice and makes recommendations to the Chief Research and Development Officer, the Under Secretary for Health and the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, concerning the nature and scope of Research and Development activities, particularly those that support Priority, "Increase Access to Healthcare". Since this Council is a policy and not a review board, it does not consider specific research proposals, although studies that support Priority, " Increase Access to Healthcare", is summarized and briefed to the Council. The Council periodically forwards letters to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs expressing concern about specific research issues.

03/07/2018 - 03/07/2018

The Council provides advice to the Secretary and the Under Secretary for Health (USH) and makes recommendations on the nature and scope of research and development sponsored and/or conducted by the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) to include: (1) the policies and projects of the Office of Research and Development (ORD); (2) the focus of research on the high priority health care needs of Veterans; (3) the balance of basic, applied, and outcomes research; (4) the scientific merit review process; (5) the appropriate mechanisms by which ORD can leverage its resources to enhance the research financial base; (6) the rapid response to changing health care needs, while maintaining the stability of the research infrastructure; and (7) the protection of human subjects of research; while supporting MyVA Breakthrough Priority, "Improve Veteran Experience." The Council provides advice and makes recommendations to the Chief Research and Development Officer, the Under Secretary for Health and the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, concerning the nature and scope of Research and Development activities, particularly those that support Priority, "Increase Access to Healthcare". Since this Council is a policy and not a review board, it does not consider specific research proposals, although studies that support Priority, " Increase Access to Healthcare", is summarized and briefed to the Council. The Council periodically forwards letters to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs expressing concern about specific research issues.

06/06/2018 - 06/06/2018

The Council provides advice to the Secretary and the Under Secretary for Health (USH) and makes recommendations on the nature and scope of research and development sponsored and/or conducted by the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) to include: (1) the policies and projects of the Office of Research and Development (ORD); (2) the focus of research on the high priority health care needs of Veterans; (3) the balance of basic, applied, and outcomes research; (4) the scientific merit review process; (5) the appropriate mechanisms by which ORD can leverage its resources to enhance the research financial base; (6) the rapid response to changing health care needs, while maintaining the stability of the research infrastructure; and (7) the protection of human subjects of research; while supporting MyVA Breakthrough Priority, "Improve Veteran Experience." The Council provides advice and makes recommendations to the Chief Research and Development Officer, the Under Secretary for Health and the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, concerning the nature and scope of Research and Development activities, particularly those that support Priority, "Increase Access to Healthcare". Since this Council is a policy and not a review board, it does not consider specific research proposals, although studies that support Priority, " Increase Access to Healthcare", is summarized and briefed to the Council. The Council periodically forwards letters to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs expressing concern about specific research issues.

09/05/2018 - 09/05/2018

Number of Committee Meetings Listed: 4

	Current FY	Next FY
18a(1). Personnel Pmts to Non-Federal Members	\$6,050.00	\$7,500.00
18a(2). Personnel Pmts to Federal Members	\$6,400.00	\$5,500.00
18a(3). Personnel Pmts to Federal Staff	\$60,000.00	\$65,000.00
18a(4). Personnel Pmts to Non-Member Consultants	\$0.00	\$0.00

18b(1). Travel and Per Diem to Non-Federal Members	\$16,450.00	\$20,000.00
18b(2). Travel and Per Diem to Federal Members	\$2,756.00	\$5,000.00
18b(3). Travel and Per Diem to Federal Staff	\$0.00	\$5,000.00
18b(4). Travel and Per Diem to Non-member Consultants	\$0.00	\$0.00
18c. Other(rents,user charges, graphics, printing, mail, etc.)	\$8,492.00	\$8,500.00
18d. Total	\$100,148.00	\$116,500.00
19. Federal Staff Support Years (FTE)	0.30	0.30

20a. How does the Committee accomplish its purpose?

The Office of Research and Development (ORD) convenes periodic meetings of the Council to provide external consultation and review for VA's research mission. The Council provides advice and makes recommendations to the Chief Research and Development Officer, the Under Secretary for Health and the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, concerning the nature and scope of Research and Development activities, particularly those that support priority areas. NRAC best aligns with implementing the mission act [improving Veterans access to health care]. They review the research program and how it is aligned with promoting a learning organization that improves processes to provide better access to health care and medical solutions to problems experienced by Veterans. The NRAC provides feedback to ORD, the USH, and the Secretary about the strategic position of the R&D program and ways to improve the work performed by the R&D program. Since this Council is a policy and not a review board, it does not consider specific research proposals, although studies that support priority. The Council periodically forwards letters to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs expressing concern about specific research issues. As advisory to the Secretary and Under Secretary for Health, the Council conducts an annual assessment of the VA ORD's Research Program as part of the performance assessment Rating Tool process. This assessment is based upon guidelines related to the scientific importance of the research on Veterans' health, and its impact on the public health of the general population. The Council considers the appropriateness of the research to the VA healthcare mission, the balance of this research in terms of the burden of disease and the special responsibilities of VA in the areas of mental health, Suicide, PTSD, TBI, substance use, homelessness, pain and opioid use, spinal cord injury, prosthetics and high-risk populations, care of aging Veteran including caregiving, LTC, genomic medicine, Big data and MVP, access, care coordination and patient centered care and deployment related conditions including Gulf War.

20b. How does the Committee balance its membership?

In 2018, seven new members were appointed. The Council includes knowledgeable VA- and non-VA experts, and Veterans' community representatives with special qualifications

and competence to deal effectively with medical research and development issues in VA. The Council consists of outside physicians, scientists, academic and other leaders as well as a Veteran thereby assuring that important perspective on the health problems of Veterans. Close attention was given to equitable geographic distribution and to ethnic and gender representation. Membership provides a balance of views and a range of expertise essential to attaining the stated goals of the Council. The membership of the Council provides a unique opportunity for VA to highlight the strengths and quality of its research program to a distinguished national group who can further advance VA's research program.

20c. How frequent and relevant are the Committee Meetings?

Meetings are generally held once every quarter: March, June, September and December. The Annual Report to the NRAC is presented to the NRAC by Research and Development staff at the December meeting. Comments include updates from the prior year regarding research, awards, accomplishments, and other information.

20d. Why can't the advice or information this committee provides be obtained elsewhere?

The experts on the NRAC provide advice and most importantly, use their broad knowledge bases to inform and discuss relevant research issues.

20e. Why is it necessary to close and/or partially closed committee meetings?

All meetings were open in FY18.

21. Remarks

For estimated figures for 2018, the cost for non-federal travel increased due to a site visit in the field at the Atlanta VA Medical Center. Six of twelve members reside in the DC Metro area, and we usually do not pay flight and hotel costs. This site visit also requires federal staff to travel to Atlanta, which increases the estimated figure over last year's \$0.

Designated Federal Officer

Avery Ann Rock Management and Program Analyst

Committee Members	Start	End	Occupation	Member Designation
Feussner, John	02/24/2014	02/24/2018	Dean of Clinical Affairs, Univ. of South Carolina	Special Government Employee (SGE) Member
Grody, Wayne	02/24/2014	02/24/2018	Professor, UCLA School of Medicine	Special Government Employee (SGE) Member
Rauch, Terry	02/24/2014	02/24/2018	Director of Medical Research Dept of Defense	Regular Government Employee (RGE) Member
Steinwachs, Donald	02/24/2014	02/24/2018	Professor, Johns Hopkins School of Medicine	Special Government Employee (SGE) Member

Tabor, Katherine	02/24/2014	02/24/2018	Senior Scientist, American Medical Association	Special Government Employee (SGE) Member
Washington, Donna	02/24/2014	02/24/2018	Clinical Researcher, Greater Los Angeles Health Servie Area	Regular Government Employee (RGE) Member
West, Barbara	02/24/2014	02/24/2018	Former Executive Director	Special Government Employee (SGE) Member

Number of Committee Members Listed: 7

Narrative Description

The NRAC reviews the Strategic Plan and the Top 5 Priorities (Greater Choice, Modernize Systems, Efficiency, Improve Timeliness, and Suicide Prevention) for VA annually. The result of medical research to include Health Services Research and Development, Clinical Sciences Research and Development, Biomedical Laboratory Research and Development and Rehabilitation Research and Development programs may have outcomes that impact the VA and it's customers/patients. A device or treatment that improves health care or increases timeliness will increase trust in the government and customer satisfaction. A new process may result in increased trust, policy changes, service delivery, customer satisfaction or implementation of a new law.

What are the most significant program outcomes associated with this committee?

Checked if Applies

Improvements to health or safety	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Trust in government	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Major policy changes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Advance in scientific research	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Effective grant making	<input type="checkbox"/>
Improved service delivery	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Increased customer satisfaction	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Implementation of laws or regulatory requirements	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>

Outcome Comments

The result of medical research to include Health Services Research and Development, Clinical Sciences Research and Development, Biomedical Laboratory Research and Development and Rehabilitation Research and Development programs may have outcomes that impact the VA and it's customers/patients.

What are the cost savings associated with this committee?

Checked if Applies

None	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Unable to Determine	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Under \$100,000	<input type="checkbox"/>
\$100,000 - \$500,000	<input type="checkbox"/>
\$500,001 - \$1,000,000	<input type="checkbox"/>
\$1,000,001 - \$5,000,000	<input type="checkbox"/>
\$5,000,001 - \$10,000,000	<input type="checkbox"/>
Over \$10,000,000	<input type="checkbox"/>
Cost Savings Other	<input type="checkbox"/>

Cost Savings Comments

The cost savings are unable to be determined as the research the Council reviews may or may not have outcomes for VA and it's customers/patients.

What is the approximate Number of recommendations produced by this committee for the life of the committee?

0

Number of Recommendations Comments

2018 No new recommendations.

What is the approximate Percentage of these recommendations that have been or will be Fully implemented by the agency?

0%

% of Recommendations Fully Implemented Comments

This recommendation was completed in FY16: The Journal of Rehabilitation Research and Development is down sizing and will end it's run in 2016. Recommendation 1: ORD planning to submit a legislative proposal for 2020 to address VA's critical shortage of adequate wet-lab research space by removing the "pre-commitment restriction" currently in place that prohibits VA facilities from entering into agreements to secure research space with research partners at the construction phase. Recommendation 3 - VA has made the job announcements for the three additional TTSs and the database manager and is currently in the hiring selection process. The VA estimates the new TTSs and the new database manager will be hired by the end of Fiscal Year 2018 (FY18). New TTS personnel have been hired.

What is the approximate Percentage of these recommendations that have been or will be Partially implemented by the agency?

0%

% of Recommendations Partially Implemented Comments

No recommendations are being implemented at this time.

Does the agency provide the committee with feedback regarding actions taken to implement recommendations or advice offered?

Yes ☒ No ☐ Not Applicable ☐

Agency Feedback Comments

The Office of Management and Budget requires that the NRAC conduct an annual assessment of the VA research program, which is based on guidelines related to the scientific importance of research on Veterans' health, and its impact on the public health of the general population. The NRAC considers the appropriateness of the research to VA's healthcare mission and makes observations about the research in the areas of mental health, traumatic brain injury, and deployment health. The NRAC provides an efficient mechanism to keep key national research opinion leaders aware of VA's work. The state of VA research is graded by the Council and provided to the SECVA in an annual letter. Recommendation 1: VA Response: Concur in principle. VA recognizes the importance of collaborating with research partners to better advance the health care of Veterans. VA will explore options to ensure VA access to more advanced equipment and facilities and furthering the ability to enhance academic and industry collaborations for innovative research while reducing overall costs. Recommendation 2: VA Response: Non-Concur. VA recognizes the importance of aligning program offices responsible for key statutory missions at the highest levels of the Veterans Health Administration (VHA). The Secretary is steadfast in his support of VA's research mission and clinical education mission. VA is currently implementing an extensive modernization plan of the VHA Central Office. The Office of Research and Development will be prominently realigned to assure agency support of the research mission. Recommendation 3: VA Response: Concur. VA understands the need to hire five additional Technology Transfer Specialists (TTS) in order to improve technology transfer services across the Department to maximize the technology being transferred/licensed to the private sector in order to provide better products and services to Veterans and the American Public and bolster revenue into VA in order to fund additional research. VA is currently processing the job announcement to hire three additional TTS and a database manager by the end of 2018. VA will reevaluate staffing needs after the four additional employees have been in place for 6 months.

What other actions has the agency taken as a result of the committee's advice or recommendation?

Checked if Applies

Reorganized Priorities	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reallocated resources	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Issued new regulation	<input type="checkbox"/>
Proposed legislation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Approved grants or other payments	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>

Action Comments

The financial resources saved by ending the hard copy printing of the Journal of Rehabilitation Research were reallocated to new grant funding within the Office of Research and Development.

Is the Committee engaged in the review of applications for grants?

No

Grant Review Comments

N/A

How is access provided to the information for the Committee's documentation?

Checked if Applies

Contact DFO	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Online Agency Web Site	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Online Committee Web Site	<input type="checkbox"/>
Online GSA FACA Web Site	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Publications	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>

Access Comments

N/A